

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

September 9, 2003

The Honorable Duncan Hunter  
Chairman, House Armed Services Committee  
2120 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Ike Skelton  
Ranking Member, House Armed Services Committee  
2120 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Hunter and Ranking Member Skelton,

We are writing to request that the Armed Services Committee immediately conduct a series of open hearings on the situation in Iraq and its impact on our armed forces. We are concerned that events on the ground are moving too quickly to delay these hearings any longer. By any measure, combat operations in Iraq continue. The President's overtures to the United Nations and his announcement that he will seek \$87 billion in additional funds for operations in Iraq clearly demonstrate that the situation in Iraq is significantly different from pre-war assessments. The ongoing violence and dramatic changes in course by the United States in Iraq demand closer review by Congress.

We support our troops and are committed to giving them whatever they need to accomplish their mission, but we have many concerns about the situation on the ground in Iraq. Continuing operations in Iraq will have a significant impact on the health of our armed forces and the success of the larger global fight against terrorism. We are concerned that the military forces now in place may be insufficient or inappropriate for the mission being undertaken. Heavy reliance on reserve component troops creates many serious concerns about the future of our reserve forces. The size of the U.S. presence in Iraq also raises many long-term questions about the adequacy of our force structure, particularly in the U.S. Army. We are also troubled by reports from the field indicating that equipment shortages, a lack of repair parts, and extremely poor living conditions continue to plague our forces months after the supposed end of major combat operations.


Before giving the President another \$87 billion to prosecute the war and reconstruct Iraq, Congress must know more about how the money will be spent, how these concerns will be addressed, and what the specific plan is for achieving U.S. objectives in Iraq. We need a specific plan because the steady stream of wounded and killed raises many concerns about the deteriorating security situation in some parts of the country. The ongoing security crisis will hinder efforts to broaden international support for Iraq's reconstruction and may delay the handover of real authority to the Iraqi people.

We feel strongly that these and many other questions require extensive investigation by the Armed Services Committee. We appreciate the periodic briefings on the situation in Iraq that you have sponsored to date, but we need real hearings with key administration and military leaders to fully examine the many issues affecting U.S. Armed Forces in Iraq.

We urge you in the strongest possible terms to call for a series of open hearings on Iraq as soon as possible. We owe it to our troops in the field and our constituents to explore these issues now.


Sincerely,

  
Jim Cooper

  
John Spratt

  
Neil Abernethy

  
Silvestre Reyes

  
Adam Smith


  
Baron P. Hill

  
Steve Israel

  
Tim Ryan

  
Marty Meehan

  
Vic Snyder

  
Loretta Sanchez

  
James R. Langevin

  
Rick Larsen

  
Lane Evans